



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

February 2024

Heart Health Services at VA

Your heart health is determined by many different factors such as diet, exercise, family history, and individual risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and smoking.

All Veterans need to think about their heart health. Work with your VA primary care provider to understand your risks for heart disease and what you can do to protect your heart.

As a Veteran, you may have unique factors from your time in the service that can increase your risk of heart disease. Heart disease is the number 1 cause of death in men and women in the United States. In addition to the traditional risk factors such as high blood pressure and diabetes, mental health concerns such as PTSD and depression, and experiences of trauma including military sexual trauma can contribute to your risk.

VA offers a variety of services to promote your heart health, including diagnosing and treating heart disease as well as life-long risk reduction. Your VA primary care provider will assess your risks and help you get started on a heart health plan. The best way to prevent heart disease is through lifestyle changes such as:

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“When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.”

- Paulo Coelho

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- Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet
- Striving for a healthy weight
- Completing around 3 hours of exercise per week
- Keeping conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure well-controlled
- Managing your stress levels and practicing self-care
- Aiming to get 7-8 hours of sleep every night
- Avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol intake

If focusing on all these factors is too much, choose a few of them to take action on. Focusing on a few of these is still beneficial to your heart health. If you need tests or treatment for heart disease, appointments and services will be coordinated through your primary care provider. All Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for cardiovascular (heart) risk assessments, prevention services, and treatment. Talk to your VA primary care provider about tools available to prevent and manage heart disease. If you have symptoms of heart disease, or you are already diagnosed with a condition such as angina, heart attack, or heart failure, VA has resources for evaluation and treatment, including Echocardiogram (EKG or ECG), stress testing, cardiology clinics, cardiac catheterization and more.

The first step to access heart health services at VA is to set up an appointment with your VA primary care provider. They will work with you to assess your needs and come up with a plan that is best for you. They can provide referrals to cardiology (heart specialists) if needed. If you don't already use VA health care, please contact our office to see if you are eligible and to enroll.

Following is some more information, help and resources on heart health:

- [VA Tobacco Cessation Resources](#) offers a variety of resources and programs to help Veterans quit tobacco.
- Check out VA's [Mindfulness Coach App](#). It was designed to help Veterans, service members, and others learn how to practice mindfulness.
- VA's [MOVE! Weight Management Program](#) has the most up-to-date approaches for weight management.
- [American Heart Association](#) funds heart disease medical research studies and offers comprehensive information about various heart conditions and treatments.
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has tips on preventing heart disease and what you can do about it.
- [Million Hearts](#) is a national initiative to prevent a million heart attacks and strokes over five years.

FEBRUARY IS
**AMERICAN
HEART
MONTH**



Heart Month 2024

Heart Month is an annual observance dedicated to raising awareness about heart health and cardiovascular conditions. It serves as a reminder to prioritize heart-healthy lifestyles, learn about heart disease prevention, and support those affected by cardiovascular conditions. Heart disease remains a leading cause of death worldwide, and this observance seeks to reduce its impact through awareness and action.

Improving heart health involves making conscious choices to reduce risk factors and adopt heart-healthy habits. Here are some ways to promote heart health:

- 1) Eat a balanced diet: Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy products.
- 2) Exercise regularly: Engage in physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week.
- 3) Quit smoking.
- 4) Manage stress: Practice mindfulness, meditation or yoga.
- 5) Monitor blood pressure.
- 6) Control cholesterol.
- 7) Maintain a healthy weight.
- 8) Limit alcohol consumption: If you drink, do so in moderation.
- 9) Get adequate sleep: Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night.

The goal of Heart Month is to reduce the prevalence of heart disease and stroke by educating the public, advocating for policies & funding research.

Keeping Your VA Benefits Safe From Identity Theft and Fraud

In the contemporary digital era, identity theft is a more likely occurrence than home burglary or car theft. As a Veteran, you hold more sensitive information than an average citizen, necessitating careful protection of your personal accounts, Veteran ID, VA.gov account login, and any benefits you may receive, such as disability compensation and education benefits. Veterans are highly susceptible to fraudulent activities, online scams and deceitful individuals.

[Identity theft](#) occurs when hackers obtain sensitive Personally Identifiable Information (PII) like credit card details to sell on the dark web or use for their own gain. Identity theft is a difficult crime to prevent, but there are several measures you can take to safeguard yourself and your VA benefits. It's essential to stay vigilant and familiarize yourself with the following frequently occurring common online scams:

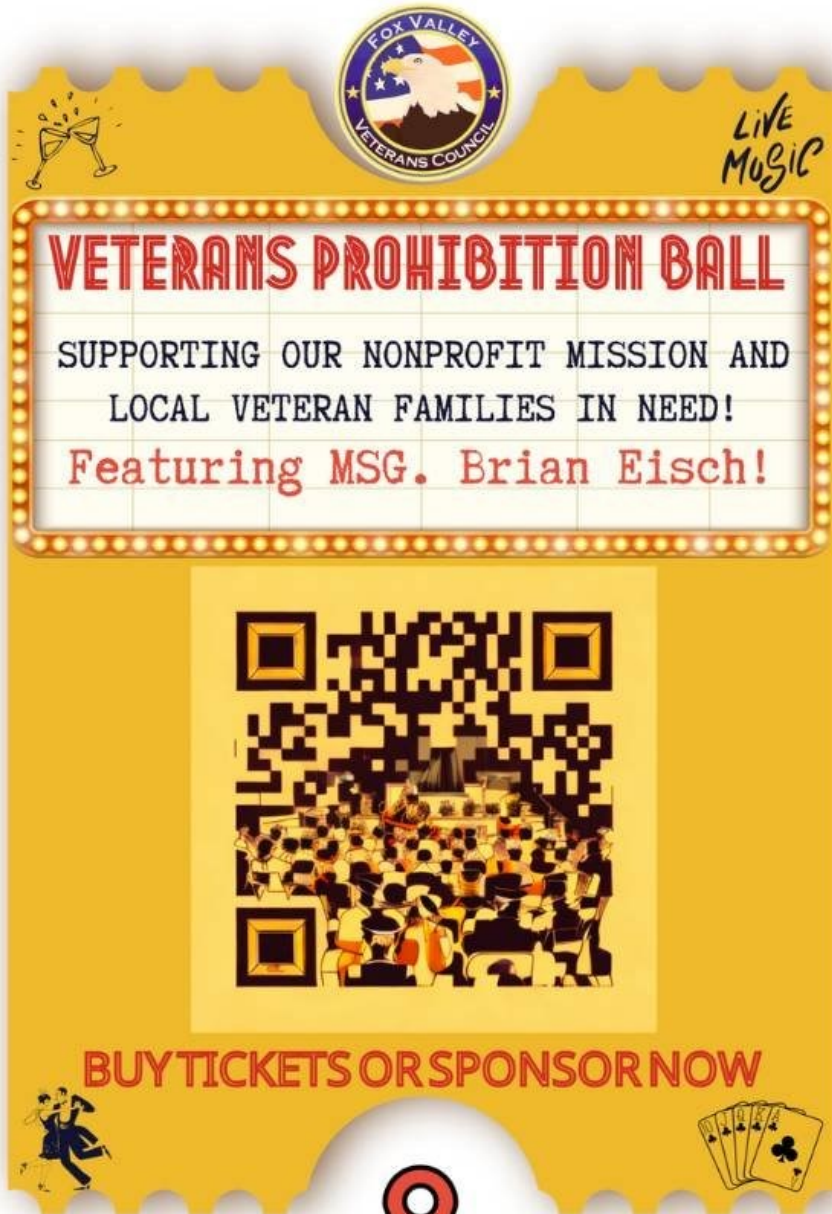
- Direct Deposit/Payment redirection: A bad actor obtains PII to unlawfully access and gain control of Veterans' and beneficiaries' accounts.
- [Phishing](#): A fraudulent practice where an imposter creates a fake online persona to deceive Veterans and their beneficiaries into providing PII.
- Email: A type of scam in which a fraudster sends a fake email, often promoting a contest or reward, to trick a user into clicking on a malware link or obtain sensitive personal information.
- Phone: A scammer may pose as someone you trust and try to obtain your money or personal information to commit identity theft.
- [Spoofing](#): A caller disguises the information shown on caller ID, giving them the ability to impersonate a specific person from a certain location.
- Wired: A type of fraud that involves the use of some form of telecommunications or the internet.
- Forgery: The act of forging or producing a copy of a document, signature, banknote or work of art.
- Malware: One of the top cyber schemes used by bad actors to infect computers. They may even hold your computer "hostage" with malware until you agree to pay a ransom; this type of malware is also known as "ransomware."

Here are some identity theft prevention tips Veterans can follow to protect themselves:

- Screen emails carefully, and only open emails from senders you know and trust. Delete and block emails from unknown or suspicious senders.
- Be cautious of popups and links on websites, emails and texts that can be used to infect your device with harmful malware.
- Limit PII when you post online, such as your address, date of birth, workplace, or kinship details.
- Delete old social media accounts and limit online presence and available biographical information.
- Maximize privacy settings on all active social media accounts to protect information from unknown users.
- Do not accept friend or connection requests from individuals with only an online presence. Only add friends or connections you know and trust in real life, not those who you have only met online.
- Download strong antivirus software to protect yourself from malware attacks.
- Be aware of signs of a malware infection. If your computer runs unusually slowly or frequently crashes without explanation, it may be an indication it is infected with malware.
- Never send bank information or payment to "online friends" or others. Scammers may threaten to destroy your files or data if you do not send payment or banking information. Be alert! Identity theft is not always committed by strangers.
- Frequently change and maintain strong passwords and never use PII in the password.
- Be cautious of telephone numbers on your called ID. Scammers can change the telephone number (spoofing) to make a call appear to come from a different person or place.
- Only shop on sites that are validated - go directly where you want to shop. Check the URL for spelling mistakes or errors.
- Use a credit card instead of a debit card. Credit cards typically provide added protection against fraudulent charges.
- Do not sign forms that are not VA generated or are a third-party authorization for someone to provide "behind-the-scenes" claim assistance.

VA encourages Veterans and their beneficiaries to know the warning signs of the various types of fraud and the best practices to avoid falling victim to a scam. If a Veteran believes their identity has been stolen, they should contact the [Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC). Identity theft can be reported to the FTC at IdentityTheft@va.gov. If a Veteran has concerns about their VA services being impacted by identity theft, they can call the toll-free VA Identity Theft Helpline at 1-855-578-5492. If a Veteran believes they've experienced health care-related fraud, they can contact the Veterans Health Administration at 1-866-842-4357. If a Veteran believes they've experienced VA Benefits fraud, they can contact the VA Benefits Hotline at 1-800-827-1000. Veterans can also learn more about fraud prevention by visiting the [Protecting Veterans from Fraud](#) webpage.

Upcoming Event



The poster features a yellow background with a scalloped top and bottom. At the top center is the Fox Valley Veterans Council logo, which includes an eagle and the text 'FOX VALLEY VETERANS COUNCIL'. To the left of the logo is an illustration of two clinking glasses, and to the right is the text 'LIVE MUSIC'. The main text is enclosed in a white rectangular box with a red border and a drop shadow. Below the main text is a QR code and an illustration of a large crowd of people at a ball. At the bottom of the poster are icons for a couple dancing and a hand holding playing cards.

VETERANS PROHIBITION BALL

SUPPORTING OUR NONPROFIT MISSION AND
LOCAL VETERAN FAMILIES IN NEED!

Featuring MSG. Brian Eisch!

BUY TICKETS OR SPONSOR NOW



Venue 404, Oshkosh, WI
March 7, 2024: 6:30 PM (AGE 21+)
foxvalleyveterans.org

CONTACT US

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Neenah, WI 54956
(920) 729-4820

Stay informed about benefits; join our e-mail list.
Send a request to:

CVSO@winnebagoountywi.gov

Visit us on the web at:

www.winnebagoountywi.gov/veterans



www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO

For a list of more events,
check out our [calendar](#) !